CodeMash 2017 Recap

Last week, I had the opportunity to attend [CodeMash 2017](http://www.codemash.org) at the Kalahari Resort in Sandusky, OH. For those not familiar, this is developer's conference held each year in early January that is broken down into two major parts. The first two days feature pre-compiler sessions that last 4 hours each with a focus on hands on learning and activities. The last two days feature more traditional conference presentations, each lasting one hour. There is also an accompanying KidzMash with activities and sessions tailored to children which works out great for attendees who need/want to bring their families along. Approximately 2,000 people attend this conference with most of the attendees coming from Ohio and Michigan.

Based on the sessions I attended and the topics covered by other sessions offered during the conference, here is my take on the developer related technology landscape.

JavaScript is EVERYWHERE!

Watch this famous [Steve Ballmer video]( https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vhh\_GeBPOhs), replacing "developers" with "JavaScript" and you'll get the idea. Client side, server side, IoT...CodeMash had it all covered. A quick search for JavaScript on the [CodeMash schedule page](http://www.codemash.org/schedule/) reveals 90 matches. It is clear that JavaScript is the most popular language and I do not anticipate this changing anytime soon. If anything, it will continue to grow.

It's React, then Angular 2, then nothing?

React was easily the most covered JavaScript framework/library at CodeMash. A quick search on the CodeMash schedule page reveals 51 matches. I personally attended one of the React percompiler sessions and came away thinking that I should spend a bit more time working with it. Angular 2 was a distant second with regards to session coverage, with 19 matches on the schedule page. The other frequently mentioned and used frameworks/libraries (examples: Ember, Backbone, Vue) got no direct session coverage. Currently, it looks like React and Angular 2 are where the action is. But, as any experienced and longer term JavaScript developer knows, this landscape will continue to change. It would not surprise me at all to see new frameworks/libraries getting widespread coverage at CodeMash 2018.

ES6 momentum

When compared to CodeMash 2016, the ES6 session coverage at CodeMash 2017 indicates growing momentum and use. What continues to hold it back is widespread browser support, especially in the mobile space. So, transpilers like Babel are still very much required. Let's see what the next year brings. I am still not convinced that using transpilers to convert code from one format to the other is the correct architectural approach. And I am still not convinced that adding classes to JavaScript is the correct approach either.

Security must not be ignored

The only topic rivaling JavaScript at CodeMash 2017 was security. This comes as no surprise considering the amount of news we see on a daily basis on hacking and on security breaches. In addition to pre-compiler and regular session coverage, there was also a conference long capture the flag tournament focused on honing one's security skills. Security is vitally important and will remain so. And it's good to see security getting a lot of session coverage at conferences like CodeMash.

Testing must not be ignored either

There were a lot of sessions on how to effectively write and run tests. This is a recurring session theme at CodeMash. Testing matters and testing works. Honestly, there is no reason for project teams to put off writing tests. And there is a lot of technology out there to help teams be more effective writing and running tests.

.Net and Java remain relevant

.Net got quite a bit of coverage at CodeMash. I think this is driven by two factors. (1) Microsoft is one of the biggest CodeMash sponsors and (2) the attendee audience at CodeMash includes a large .Net segment. Case in point: While attending a [session on microservices]( http://www.codemash.org/session/microservices-lessons-from-the-trenches/), the presenter asked how many in the audience were .Net developers. Approximately 90% raised their hands. Developing and running .Net on non-Windows platforms remains a focus. Full credit to Microsoft for evolving away from their Windows everywhere stance. And full credit to Microsoft for continuing a highly visible presence at conferences like CodeMash.

Java got some decent session coverage as well, almost all of it focused on developing web apps. There was a push by the organizers to get more Java session proposals submitted and it appears that effort paid off a bit. Java remains a widely used and viable platform. I think what prevents it from getting more pub and frankly, more excitement from developers is the lack of evangelism from Oracle. No one from Oracle was present at CodeMash.

Other topics

In addition to the specific callouts above, there were several sessions on other developer related technologies (examples: F#, Go, Python, Swift, SQL, game development, microservices, cloud), and on soft skills (examples: communication, interviewing, mentoring, leadership). So, if one was looking to learn something completely different or if one was looking to brush up on some soft skills, there were ample opportunities to do so.

In conclusion

Conference like CodeMash that offer a wide range of session topics remain a valuable learning experience for developers of all experience levels. And the session topics can give us a good insight into which technologies are trending right now. If you also attended CodeMash 2017, please write up and share your thoughts on what you saw and learned.

And if you have any feedback for me regarding this post or any other content on my site, please do not hesitate to contact me using the contact links below.